

Tilt

The "Anderson papers" — secret summaries of the White House meetings of Dec. 3, 4 and 6 on the Indo-Pakistani crisis, made public by columnist Jack Anderson — confirm the starkly anti-India aspect of American policy and illuminate its seeming cynicism as well. For, although Mr. Nixon insists the United States acted for "the principle that any nation has a right to its integrity," nowhere in the Anderson papers is there a single reference to any purpose except to "tilt toward Pakistan." "I am getting hell every half hour from the President that we are not being tough enough on India," Henry Kissinger, his leading aide, said at one point. "He does not believe we are carrying out his wishes. He wants to tilt in favor of Pakistan."

Mr. Nixon succeeded, too. For months, the United States had avoided condemning Pakistan for murdering tens of thousands of Bengalis and for expelling millions of others into India. But now, with some Biharis threatened by Bengalis, "Dr. Kissinger suggested that [an international appeal] be done quickly in order to prevent a bloodbath." Impartial observers had long believed that a political settlement required release of the imprisoned Bengali leader Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Now, according to a paraphrase by the author of these reports, Dr. Kissinger said "we will go along in general terms with reference to political accommodation in East Pakistan but we will certainly not imply or suggest any specifics, such as the release of Mujib."

Advised that Security Council action against India was unlikely, Dr. Kissinger said, according to the documents, "Everyone knows how all this will come out and everyone knows that India will ultimately occupy East Pakistan. We must, therefore, make clear our position, table our resolution." Administration statements on the war, its steps on aid cutoffs: all had to show "tilt." Among the decisions: "Dr. Kissinger also directed that henceforth we show a certain coolness to the Indians; the Indian Ambassador is not to be treated at too high a level." Told that the law prevented transfer of Jordanian or Saudi Arabian military equipment

to Pakistan, Dr. Kissinger "indicated he would like a paper by tomorrow."

Now, we are aware that the material revealed in the Anderson papers is not inconsistent with a policy dedicated to the principle of national territorial integrity. India did invade Pakistan: its violation was extremely serious. We continue to believe, however, that the best chance of preserving Pakistan lay in much early, heavy and sustained American pressure on President Yahya Khan—such pressure was never applied—and that once Pakistan had dumped 10 million refugees into India, India had a provocation and a pretext that probably no country could have withstood. In those conditions, an American tilt toward Pakistan, in the name of Pakistani integrity, seemed to us at the time—and seems to us even more now, with publication of the Anderson papers—as a baffling flight into geopolitical fantasy.

Or is it so baffling? Could it not be that Mr. Nixon's endlessly trumpeted invitation to Peking is almost enough to explain the gratuitous fervor of American support for Islamabad? It is all very well to talk about respecting the principle of territorial integrity. But it could not have been far from the President's mind that if he went to Peking having just let a client go down the drain, or having seemed to, his position might have been considerably undermined. If this is so, then the long lead-time of the Peking trip—seven months from announcement to scheduled arrival—did in fact put Mr. Nixon in hock to a Pakistani regime that he otherwise could have treated with the coolness it deserved. A similar observation might be made about Mr. Nixon's trip to Moscow, although there other complicating factors obtain.

We cannot know for sure. But we know a lot more than we did, and for that we can all be grateful to Jack Anderson, who has brought to the public's attention material essential to the public's understanding. If the Anderson papers do not solve every riddle of American policy in the Indo-Pakistani crisis, they are an undoubted contribution to the public's right to know.